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2 books on CIA may break law, Casey warns

From Wire Reports

NEW YORK — Central Intelligence Agency Director William J. Casey has personally warned two leading New York publishers that separate books being written for them about the CIA by investigative reporters Seymour Hersh and Bob Woodward may violate U.S. law.

Mr. Casey's warnings, in a series of personal phone calls to the publishers revealed yesterday, appear to be part of his recent and highly unusual campaign to prevent publication of material he thinks could harm national security.

One warning went to Random House, which in late August is publishing Mr. Hersh's book about the 1983 downing by a Soviet jet fighter of South Korean Air Lines Flight 007 after it entered Soviet airspace.

Reuters reported that sources said Mr. Casey also placed similar calls to Simon and Schuster and to Mr. Woodward last week. Simon and Schuster has contracted with Mr. Woodward for a book about the CIA. A Simon and Schuster spokeswoman said the firm would have no formal comment until it could reach its president, Richard Snyder, in London.

Mr. Woodward, the *Washington Post* investigative reporter who exposed the Watergate scandal, could not be immediately reached for comment. *Post* assistant managing editor Robert Kaiser said he had no comment.

Random House Chairman Robert Bernstein told Reuters he believed that Mr. Casey's telephone calls to Mr. Hersh and Random editor Robert Loomis last week and to himself yesterday might reflect "a desire to stop publication of the book."

He and other Random House officials quoted Mr. Casey as saying that the book might contain information that violated the law and that it was his duty to uphold the law. He was referring to a seldom-used 1950 statute on disclosing certain intelligence information.

"Although Mr. Casey and other government officials may be embar-

rassed by Mr. Hersh's book, I am satisfied its publication is in the national interest and is entirely lawful," Mr. Bernstein said Tuesday in *The New York Times*.

Mr. Hersh said he was perplexed that Mr. Casey issued the warning while acknowledging he did not know the content of the book. "There's nothing in it the public should not know, and there's nothing that will help the Russians in any way," Mr. Hersh said.

In his telephone call to Mr. Bernstein yesterday, Mr. Casey also said that he was having a recent book on the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, "Shootdown" by British author R. W. Johnson, checked to see if it violated the law, Random House said.

Mr. Casey, CIA director since 1981, last month warned NBC and the *Washington Post* that they could be charged under the seldom-used 1950 anti-espionage law if they released stories about Ronald Pelton, then facing trial on espionage charges, that revealed classified information. Pelton was later convicted of spying for the Soviets.

The law makes it illegal for anyone to disclose classified information about U.S. ciphers, code-breaking or other communications intelligence. It has never been invoked against publications.

In his calls to Random House, Mr. Casey expressed fear that Mr. Hersh's book, "The Target is Destroyed," contained material about communications intelligence.

According to Random's chief lawyer, Gerald Hollingsworth, "Casey said he has talked to a lot of reporters who told him Sy Hersh had the whole works on everything the CIA has in the Far East."

Mr. Loomis said the book "is not a speculative work."

"It answers the questions as to what happened, including whether or not the plane had violated Soviet airspace on a spying mission," he said.

Moscow made such a claim to defend the attack on the plane.

After the plane was downed with the loss of 269 lives, the Reagan administration released intercepted communications from the pilot of the Soviet jet in which he reported, "The target is destroyed."

Random Chairman Bernstein said, "I am puzzled and disturbed by what is happening. It is especially disturbing that Mr. Casey, who is an attorney and head of one of the most powerful agencies in government, would call an editor and exaggerate the reach of the law he said he must uphold."

"We find it difficult to take this series of calls . . . as anything other than a desire to stop publication of this book."